

theless lie had observed the rise of the Symbolist, Occultist, and Decadent schools, — a wave of returning mysticism, as it were, which, as he had remarked in an address to the Paris students, was invading art as well as literature. No little balderdash, was being written about the alleged bankruptcy of science, Eome was coquetting with the Kepublic, there was much talk of a new Catholicism adapted to the modern world, the clergy were showing extreme activity, and a good many *universitaires* and *iiormaliens*, among whom the Voltairean spirit had formerly predominated, seemed won over to the Church's side and anxious to co-operate with it in securing the return of France to the fold, as if, indeed, agnosticism had been carried too far and must now be checked. The Louxdes and similar pilgrimages represented a notable phase of the agitation, and Zola, who had attended them two years running as a spectator, found in them some illustration of the first of the Christian virtues, Faith. It thereupon occurred to him that Eome would illustrate Hope, for it was in her and in her pontiff, Leo XIII, that all who desired to see the world reconquered by a rejuvenated Catholicism set their hopes. Finally Paris would afford abundant illustration of Charity in its various senses. Now the question, whether religion might flourish anew in France depended, at least largely, on the practice

of the aforesaid virtues and the light in which
they were
regarded by the community at large. Was the
faith of
Lourdes justified, was any real hope to be
found in Eome,
was the charity of Paris adequate or not? Zola
returned a
negative answer, to all those questions; and
at an early
stage of the writing of " Les Trois Villes " he
resolved to supplement this series by a further one which
would enunciate